

Message Text

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EXDIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT LISBON 4826 ACTION SECSTATE INFO BONN
LONDON MADRID MOSCOW PARIS STOCKHOLM NATO 22 AUGUST 75.

QUOTE

S E C R E T LISBON 4826

EXDIS

DEPT PLEASE PASS INFO DIA WASHDC AND USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINT, PFOR, PO

SUBJ: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES ON CURRENT
POLITICAL SITUATION

SUMMARY: CONVEYED FULL TALKING POINTS STATE 193799 (NOTAL)
TO COSTA GOMES. FOLLOWING DISCUSSION ON ANGOLA (SEPTTEL) I
TOLD HIM I DID NOT WANT TO DEAL WITH VASCO GONCALVES GOVERN-
MENT ON OUR HUMANITARIAN AID TO ANGOLAN REFUGEES. HE AGREED
TO ESTABLISH LIAISON DIRECTLY IN HIS OFFICE. COSTA GOMES
STILL INTENDS TO PUT TOGETHER COALITION GOVERNMENT WHICH WOULD
INCLUDE THE COMMUNIST PARTY AS WELL AS PS AND PPD. SAYS
COMMUNIST PARTY HAS LOST CONSIDERABLE GROUND AND IS NOW
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CHANGING ITS POLICY (THEY ARE "NOW DEMOCRATS"). HE BELIEVES
PCP CAN BE CONTROLLED WITHIN GOVERNMENT; OUTSIDE THEY WOULD
CAUSE SERIOUS LABOR UNREST IN LISBON AND SETUBAL. SAID HE
UNDERSTOOD POUTAL WAS AT CROSSROADS AND THAT LARGE

RESPONSIBILITY RESTED ON HIM. HE WAS CERTAIN PORTUGAL WOULD OPT FOR DEMOCRATIC SOCIALISM. SAID ARMED FORCES HAD ALREADY CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED THEY DON'T WANT COMMUNISM. END SUMMARY.

1. MET FOR APPROXIMATELY 45 MINUTES TODAY AUGUST 22 WITH PRESIDENT COSTA GOMES. BIRTHS AMBASSADOR WHO HAD IMMEDIATELY PRECEDED ME TOLD ME HE GOT THE "SAME OLD STUFF" FROM COSTA GOMES. I THEREFORE DECIDED TO LET HIM HAVE THE FULL FLAVOR OF MY TALKING POINTS, DESPITE INFORMATION CONVEYED LISBON 4796 (NOTAL). I PARTICULARLY STRESSED OUR VIEW THAT NOW WAS THE CRUCIAL MOMENT AND THAT THE REAL DECISION RESTED IN HIS, COSTA GOMES'S HANDS. WE UNDERSTOOD FROM HIS SPEECHES THAT HE FAVORED A DEMOCRATIC FORM OF SOCIALISM, BUT WE WERE LOOKING FOR POSITIVE EVIDENCE INDICATING THAT THIS WAS WHERE PORTUGAL WAS HEADED.

2. AFTER I HAD CONVEYED TALKING POINTS PRESIDENT ABRUPTLY CHANGED SUBJECT TO ANGOLA (SEPTTEL). FOLLOWING THIS INTERLUDE, I BROUGHT HIM BACK TO DISCUSSION ON PORTUGUESE POLITICAL SITUATION BY TELLING HIM I WAS CONCERNED ABOUT HOW OUR AID FOR ANGOLAN REFUGEES MIGHT BE INTERPRETED. I WAS PARTICULARLY ANXIOUS THAT IT NOT BE USED TO SUPPORT CERTAIN POLITICAL FACTIONS IN THE PRESENT STRUGGLE.

3. PRESIDENT SAID HE DID NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT I WAS DRIVING AT. THE RETURNING REFUGEES COMPLICATED THE POLITICAL SITUATION, SINCE MANY OF THEM DID NOT "CONFORM" TO THE SPIRIT OF THE 25TH OF APRIL." I SAID I HAD ANOTHER POINT IN MIND. OUR AID WAS FOR HUMANITARIAN PURPOSES, AND WE DID NOT WANT IT TO BE INTERPRETED AS A FORM OF POLITICAL SUPPORT FOR A GOVERNMENT WHOSE GOALS AND GENERAL ORIENTATION WERE ANTITHETICAL TO THOSE WE SUPPORT. THIS WAS WHY I WANTED THE LETTER REQUESTING ASSISTANCE TO COME FROM HIM. I ALSO WANTED TO DEAL ON THE REFUGEE QUESTION WITH SOMEONE IN THE PRESIDENT'S IMMEDIATE STAFF. SOMEWHAT SURPRISINGLY THE PRESIDENT DID NOT ARGUE WITH ME ABOUT THE GOVERNMENT, INDICATED HE
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UNDERSTOOD MY POINT, AND DESIGNATED HIS CHIEF OF CABINET FERREIRA DA CUNHA (WHO IS PRO-AMERICAN) AS THE MAN WITH WHOM I WAS TO WORK.

4. I RETURNED AGAIN TO MY VIEW THAT PORTUGAL HAD REACHED A TURNING POINT, WHERE POLITICAL ACTION WAS REQUIRED BY THE PRESIDENT IF THE GOALS I WAS SURE HE AND I SHARED WERE TO BE ACHIEVED. THE PRESIDENT SEEMED TO NOD HIS ASSENT (ALTHOUGH YOU NEVER CAN TELL WITH HIM) AND SAID LANUGHINGLY THAT AT THE PRESENT MOMENT ALL PORTUGUESE PARTIES ARE DEMOCRATIC. ONLY TWO HOURS EARLIER CUNHAL HAS BEEN IN HIS OFFICE AND HAD ARGUED IN FAVOR OF THE DEMOCRATIC LIBERTIES, AND THAT THOSE OF THE COMMUNIST PARTY WERE BEING INFRINGED UPON (AGAIN A

LAUGH). I REPLIED THAT IS QUITE NATURAL FOR THE COMMUNIST PARTY TO CHANGE IT LINE NOW THAT IT WAS ON THE DEFENSIVE. THE PRESIDENT SAID THE PCP HAD CHANGED A GREAT DEAL AND THIS WOULD MAKE THE FORMATION OF A GOVERNMENT EASIER. I NOTED THAT CUNHAL COULD TALK ALL HE WANTED ABOUT LIBERTIES BUT NEITHER I NOR THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT WOULD BE CONVINCED THAT THE COMMUNIST PARTY WOULD EVER BE A FORCE FOR LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY IN PORTUGAL. I FOUND IT SOMEWHAT SURPRISING THAT THE PRESIDENT WAS CONSIDERING BRINGING THEM INTO THE GOVERNMENT. DID HE EXPECT THAT THEY WOULD PARTICIPATE IN THE SAME GOVERNMENT WITH THE PPD AND THE PS? I TOLD COSTA GOMES THAT ONE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIM AND ME WAS THAT HE TENDED TO VIEW THE PROBLEMS HERE AS STEMMING FROM POOR ORGANIZATION, PERSONALITY CLASHES, AND THE INEVITABLE CHAIN OF EVENTS FOLLOWING THE FALL OF A 40-YEAR DICTATORSHIP. I FELT THAT THERE WAS A DISTINCT IDEOLOGICAL ASPECT TO THE PRESENT SITUATION. PORTUGAL WAS AT THE CROSSROADS WHERE, AS I HAD ALREADY MENTIONED, IT HAD TO DECIDE BETWEEN DICTATORSHIP OR DEMOCRACY.

5. THE PRESIDENT DID NOT ARGUE WITH ME ON THIS SUBJECT. HE ADMITTED THAT CUNHAL'S CHANGE OF HEART MAY BE TACTICAL BUT IT WAS NONETHELESS NECESSARY FOR THE GOVERNMENT, AT LEAST FOR THE TIME BEING, TO INCLUDE THE COMMUNISTS. THEY HAD A DISCIPLINED AND LARGE FOLLOWING AMONG THE WORKING CLASS IN THE INDUSTRIAL CENTERS OF LISBON AND SETUBAL. IF THE GOVERNMENT WERE TO EXCLUDE THEM, THESE AREAS WOULD BE PLAGUED WITH VIOLENCE, WORK STOPPAGES, AND OTHER DISRUPTIVE TACTICS,
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SOMETHING THE NEW GOVERNMENT COULD NOT AFFORD.

6. I WONDERED IF THE COMMUNISTS GOT BACK INTO THE GOVERNMENT WOULD THEY NOT AGAIN LAUNCH AN OFFENSIVE. COSTA GOMES SAID HE DOUBTED THAT. THE REAL REASON THE COMMUNISTS HAD BEEN ABLE TO GAIN SO MUCH POWER WAS THAT THE PPD AND THE PS HAD BEEN DISORGANIZED, PARTICULARLY AT THE LOCAL LEVEL. NOW THESE PARTIES WERE BETTER ORGANIZED AND THE COMMUNISTS WERE LOSING SUPPORT IN CRITICAL AREAS. HE CITED THE OPORTO BANK WORKERS' ELECTIONS AS AN EXAMPLE.

7. I AGREED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES WERE MAKING SOME PROGRESS IN THE UNION AREA, BUT THE COMMUNISTS STILL HAD A STRONG GRIP ON THE MEDIA. THE PRESIDENT AGREED IN GENERAL TERMS AND THEN COMMENTED ON EACH LISBON PAPER. THE MORNING PAPERS WERE CLEARLY COMMUNIST--AND GETTING WORSE AND WORSE EACH DAY. THEY WERE SO "LOUSY" THAT "DIARIO DE NOTICIAS" WAS RAPIDLY LOSING READERSHIP. OF THE AFTERNOON PAPERS "DIARIO DE LISBOA" WAS CLEARLY COMMUNIST, "A CAPITAL" WAS MORE OR LESS, "A REPUBLICA" WAS SIMPLY LEFTIST (I MENTIONED IT SEEMS TO SUPPORT PRP/BR, AND HE AGREED), WHEREAS "JORNAL NOVO" WAS SOCIALIST. BUT HE STRESSED THAT THE SITUATION IN OPORTO WAS

VERY DIFFERENT. THE COMMUNISTS DID NOT DOMINATE THE PRESS THERE, AND THAT WAS IMPORTANT.

8. I COMPLAINED ABOUT THE TV. HE ADMITTED IT WAS AWFUL. MOSE OF THOSE RUNNING THE TELEVISION STATION WERE HOLDOVERS FROM THE PREVIOUS REGIME WHO HAD SWUNG WAY TO THE LEFT IN ORDER TO COMPENSATE FOR THEIR PREVIOUS POSITIONS. THEIR WORST FAULT, HOWEVER, WAS THEIR TOTAL INCIMPETENCE.

9. AS WE PARTED I AGAIN EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF DEFINITIVE ACTION TO DEMONSTRATE THAT PORTUGAL WAS ON THE DEMOCRATIC PATH. THE WORLD WAS LOOKING FOR A SIGNAL, I SAID. THE PRESIDENT SAID HE HAD NO DOUBTS THAT COMMUNIST INFLUENCE WAS DECREASING AND THAT THE SITUATION WOULD IMPROVE. THE ARMED FORCES, HE STRESSED, HAD GIVEN A STRONG SIGNAL THAT THEY DO NOT WANT A COMMUNIST PORTUGAL.

10. COMMENT: INFORMATION GIVEN ME BY COSTA GOMES CORRESPONDS TO THAT COMING IN FROM OTHER SOURCES (SEPTELS). A
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NEW GOVERNMENT IS CLEARLY BEING FORMED. WILL INCLUDE SOCIALISTS AND PROBABLY PPD ELEMENTS, ALTHOUGH THE POWER WILL BE IN THE HANDS OF THE MELO ANTUNES GROUP. (LATTER ASKED ME THROUGH CLANDESTINE CHANNELS THIS MORNING WHAT MY OPINION WAS OF SOARES, SO PRESUMABLY THEY ARE NEGOTIATING WITH HIM.) PRESIDENT SEEMS INSISTENT ON HAVING PCP IN THE GOVERNMENT, AND CAPTAIN ROSA TELLS US ANTUNES AGREES (SEPTEL). WHILE THE PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS TO ME ON CUNHAL WERE UNQUESTIONABLY NAIVE, HE DOES HAVE A POINT IN STATING THAT EXCLUDING THE PCP FROM THE GOVERNMENT COULD LEAD TO VIOLENT LABOR UNREST IN LISBON AND SETUBAL. ONLY TIME WILL TELL WHETHER HIS CONFIDENCE THAT THEY CAN BE CONTROLLED WITHIN THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE JUSTIFIED. IN THE PAST THIS HAS NOT BEEN THE CASE, BUT THERE IS NO QUESTION THAT PCP HAS NOW SUFFERED A SERIOUS SETBACK WHILE SOCIALISTS AND MILITARY MODERATES ARE GAINING STRENGTH. PERHAPS MORE IMPORTANTLY, LATTER GROUPS ARE NOW MUCH LESS NAIVE ABOUT COMMUNISTS THAN THEY WERE TEN MONTHS AGO. IT IS ALSO INTERESTING THAT PRESIDENT DID NOT ONCE MENTION VIOLENCE TO ME DESPITE HIS STRONG CONDEMNATION OF ANTI-PCP VIOLENCE TO COLUMNIST EVANS. HIS LAUGHTER ABOUT PCP'S CHANGED ATTITUDE WAS ABOUT AS HEARTY AS I HAVE EVER SEEN FROM THE STOLID COSTA GOMES.
CARLUCCI UNQUOTE ROBINSON

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